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RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 1548
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE PRIORITY
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 5604
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 6661
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 8666
RUEHNT/AMEMBASSY TASHKENT PRIORITY 1408
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SUBJECT: FATA: MISSING PAKISTANI JOURNALIST FOUND DEAD IN
WAZIRISTAN

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (U) On June 17, Pakistani media reported that the body of Hayatullah Khan Dawar, a Pakistani journalist who has been missing since December 5, 2005, was discovered by local officials in North Waziristan on Friday, June 16. The Mir Ali Assistant Political Agent Muhammad Fida Khan told the "Daily Times" that the body was found in the Khaisor mountains, four kilometers south of Mir Ali. Fida Khan said that Hayatullah had been shot in the rear of his head, and that the body was hand-cuffed and looked very weak. A long beard suggests Hayatullah had been in captivity since his disappearance six months ago.

¶2. (U) Hayatullah disappeared while working on an investigation of the death of Egyptian al Qaeda operative Hamza Rabia in Miran Shah, North Waziristan on December 1, 2005. Pakistani security agencies maintained that Rabia had been killed in a blast caused by bomb-making explosives in the house in which he was hiding. Hayatullah visited what remained of the house to investigate Rabia's death. The "Daily Times" described his photos of the wreckage as including "what some Western experts determined were parts of a Hellfire missile." Hayatullah's account, which was widely covered in Pakistan and abroad, speculated that the missile had been launched by a CIA drone. According to media accounts, Hayatullah's family maintains that he began receiving threats from "certain quarters" soon after the story broke, with an unidentified "political administration" official offering him three options: leave North Waziristan, stop reporting or accept a government job.

¶3. (SBU) News of Hayatullah's death has prompted a strong reaction, with sympathetic politicians turning out for demonstrations in several cities organized by the Tribal Union of Journalists and other media advocacy organizations. Both the English- and Urdu-language press have condemned the killing, which has raised more questions than it has answered: Who abducted Hayatullah? Why was he confined for so many months before being killed? Most press outlets have expressed deep skepticism regarding the government's claim that Hayatullah was kidnapped and executed by al Qaeda sympathizers. Although stopping short of accusing the USG, the majority have openly accused Pakistani security forces of

complicity in the journalist's death, saying that government forces had more to gain by silencing Hayatullah -- whose reporting directly contradicted official accounts of Rabia's death -- than did tribal militants sympathetic to al Qaeda. Journalists point to the timing of the disappearance so soon after Rabia's death, the government's failure to launch a serious public investigation into the kidnapping, the coincidental discovery of the body soon after local officials told the family to expect "good news" and even the handcuffs binding the victim as evidence of government involvement in this crime.

¶4. (S) The description of Hayatullah's death in the June 17 edition of the "Daily Times" tracks with details a senior Pakistani security official shared with the Ambassador on the evening of June 16, with the exception that the official said that Hayatullah's body was dumped in Mir Ali proper. The GOP official said that Hayatullah had lost 15 kilos of body weight; his body bore clear signs of torture during his captivity. The GOP official opined that Hayataullah had been captured, held and interrogated by al Qaeda sympathizers who blamed the reporter for the death of Hamza Rabia, believing that Hayatullah and other journalists operating in the FATA provided information on the identities and locations of Islamic militants to Pakistani and American security forces.

¶5. (C) Comment: Assuming the security official's version is accurate, it is another grim commentary on the extent to which control in the tribal areas, especially the Waziristans, has slipped away from the Government. The ability of militants to kidnap, hold a execute Hayatullah and then dump his body in a public place is a graphic, but no longer surprising, illustration of their capacity to operate with impunity. On the same day that Hayatullah was killed,

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two female teachers and their daughters were murdered in an adjacent agency as a warning against education for women.

¶6. (C) Comment (cont): Allegations that the USG may have been involved in Hayatullah's disappearance peaked in April 2006, when a report issued by the Committee to Protect Journalists alleged that a Pakistani military officer had told Hayatullah's family that he had been turned over to the U.S. In early May, the Department approved press guidance stating "Hayatullah Khan is not known to the United States. We have no information on his whereabouts." The press guidance received prominent coverage in the Pakistani press on May 10, after its release by the U.S. Consulate in Peshawar, and is no doubt partly responsible for reducing attention directed toward the USG in connection with this case now that Hayatullah's body has been found. End comment.

CROCKER